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ABSTRACT

An introduction to a set of working papers on standards for college libraries, this document sets out the background from which the committee started. The diversity of colleges and their libraries is explained, and some general principles are stated. One of these is that "designing a set of standards becomes the task of designing an instrument of evaluation." Another is that the library should be evaluated in terms of the educational objectives of the college. A college is defined as a four-year non-research institution. (LS)

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WORKING PAPERS

prepared by the

Subcommittee to Revise the 1959 Standards for College Libraries

Johnnie Givens, Chairperson

Supported by a J. Morris Jones--World Book Encyclopedia--ALA Goals Award

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In July 1973, Norman Tanis, President of ACRL, appointed four members to the Ad Hoc Committee to Revise the 1959 Standards for College Libraries. I was asked to serve as chairperson, since I had served during the previous year as a member of an ad hoc group which had discussed a philosophic foundation for continuing the revision work begun in 1968 by the ACRL Committee. The ad hoc group also developed a framework of activities within which the Committee might work and presented a proposal for a J. Morris Jones Award. The first year of the proposal was funded.

Prior to the 1974 Midwinter Meeting of ALA, the Committee met three times. During Midwinter, at two meetings, the Committee held interaction discussions with ACRL members and other interested persons. The Committee sets high priority on dialogue with the membership of ACRL and all other related groups which are concerned with college libraries and their measurement against standards.

Your willingness to read the attached bachground/working papers indicates your interest in the development of standards. Your comments, reactions, suggestions, recommendations, whatever your response may be, will be valuable to the Committee. Choose your medium--the Committee has access to them all. Direct it to any one member of the Committee or to all. The imperative thing to remember is that the Committee must have your feedback if it is to develop an instrument of measurement which is reasonably effective for the many uses it must meet. We are depending on your coordinate effort with the Committee as the project progresses.

Johnnie Givens, Chairperson
The ACRL Ad Hoc Committee
to Revise Standards for
College Libraries

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2/74
2 of 2

INTRODUCTION

by Johnnie Givens

When in 1968 the Association of College and Research Libraries initiated the project to revise its 1959 Standards for College Libraries, it was responding to an awareness that the decade which was ending had encompassed changes in profiles and programs of what then was referred to as "higher education." In retrospect the late sixties may have been a difficult time from which to look forward. Committee progress appeared to be slow, in spite of the exchange of ideas which occurred between those charged with the responsibility for revision and the rest of the membership. Philosophies and concepts seemed widely divergent. Whether a vision of chaos or paradise, some members began to conjure an image of a library world without standards. But standards haven't been eliminated. They have to be dealt with, a reality facing the membership of the present revision committee.

As the committee began its assignment, feedback was strong. Consensus on concepts and uses of standards seemed lacking even among college librarians, and variations depended widely on whether application was being made by a librarian or the college president, a governing board or funding agency, an accrediting association or a legislator. Quantitative measurements were sought by some while they were considered to be limiting

and void of challenge by others. State Colleges had become regional university state-wide systems, yet their programs often continued to parallel those of the traditional college more than the research institution. The average age of students was growing older and instruction was being offered at locations other than on campus, greatly increasing the distance between the user and the central library services. Nurtured by federal funding, consortia of institutions were brought together and sharing of technology and resources was considered an appropriate way to combat slowing economic support and the high cost and quantity of publishing. All of these needs became factors influencing the committee's thinking.

Early in its discussions the committee sought to determine what a set of standards should be, what should be its purpose, and what it could be expected to do. A consensus of the Committee developed that standards generally are used for evaluation and that designing a set of standards becomes the task of designing an instrument of evaluation. The Committee agreed that no instrument should be structured without specifically identifying or defining "the college" as an institution, separate and distinct from the research university and the two year/community college. To achieve practical effectiveness, perimeters would be established to clarify the

semantic imprecision existing in the use of college or university in the name of many institutions.

Accepting the commonly held premise that the college library should reflect the educational program of its institution, the Committee questioned the possibility of evaluating a library and its programs without measuring it against the educational objectives of the college itself. Diversity of programs, ranges in size, and changing profiles of student enrollments which already have emerged and which are projected as trends of the near future led the Committee to question the validity of attempting to measure the entire population of college libraries against a single set of standards. Given the span of differences which the Committee empirically knew to exist, the members decided to explore the concept of establishing a so-called peer group evaluation within a typology determined by characteristics, easily identifiable and readily defensible. The Committee recognized the possibility and even desirability of developing sets of standards which would apply, each set, to a single grouping within the classification breakdown of the accepted typology. The Committee acknowledged its responsibility to work toward meeting the need for minimal base levels to be used in accrediting procedures while providing challenges for resources to be provided which would

bring recognized levels of quality for the educational purposes of college libraries. The Committee hoped to use the foundation of the past to support an analysis of the present as a prolog for the future.

The following set of papers represent the first stage results of the Committee through literature search and report to present background for its purposes, objectives, and concepts. These are presented to stimulate contemplation and response from all of the population groups which are concerned with and use standards. Viable and rewarding standards will be difficult to develop without common understandings and consensus of objectives.

SPECIAL REMINDER: These papers are not a set of standards. Special warning should be issued to prevent the misunderstanding that they can be used as such. The document of standards will be developed only after extensive dialogue between the committee and broad representation from the many populations which are concerned with standards.